

ЛЕНИНСКАЯ БИБЛИОТЕКА
А. КАМЕНЕВ



ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЕ ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО
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LENIN

With the close of the 19th century, the final period of the “peaceful,” organic development of capitalist society comes to an end—a period that began amidst the bloodshed of Sedan and the Paris Commune. The new 20th century inaugurates a period of political and social catastrophes: wars, national revolutions (the Russian Revolution of 1905, the Turkish, Chinese, Persian, and Portuguese revolutions), colonial uprisings, national clashes, and the redrawing of state borders—all follow in an uninterrupted succession, and in the second decade, they merge into a world war and a global uprising of the proletariat. Asia and Africa are drawn into this general movement, and hundreds of millions of new people step onto the historical stage in revolutionary forms.

Against this backdrop, the collapse of the greatest European-Asian monarchy, that of the Romanovs, takes place. It is precisely this international situation, an atmosphere of the impending collapse of capitalist society as a whole, that explains the most crucial feature of the Russian Revolution: the convergence—indeed, the almost complete fusion—of the downfall of the police-feudal state and the collapse of the rule of capital (1905—February 1917—October 1917). This distinctive feature of the course of the revolutionary movement in Russia could not have been the result of any particular program or any specific political party. It was the result of a unique combination of the national peculiarities of the Russian economy, specifically, the weakness of the national bourgeoisie, the social power of the proletariat in the major industrial centers, and the revolutionary

temper of the peasantry, which had learned through direct experience that it could acquire the lands of the serf-owning landlords only at the hands of a proletariat that had seized power—combined with the global context of rivalry among the major imperialist powers and the revolutionary awakening of the East.

It was precisely within this atmosphere—an atmosphere of preparation for and development of a massive revolutionary upsurge, one that was escalating toward ever-sharper forms of struggle; situated at the historical watershed between two world-historical epochs; and occurring in a country that bridged the gap between the ruling imperialist Europe and the world of the enslaved colonial East—that the theoretical guide and practical leader of the world proletariat, in its rebellion against the bourgeoisie, could be forged and emerge. After the genius of Marx—drawing upon the revolutionary traditions of the classic bourgeois revolutions and the revolutionary experiences of the 1840s through the 1860s—had laid the foundations for the program and tactics of the global working-class movement, Germany, France, England, and, to some extent, Russia provided that movement with first-rate scholars, propagandists, popularizers, agitators, and organizers.

Yet none of that great galaxy of workers' movement activists—Bebel, Jaurès, Guesde, Adler, Plekhanov—crossed the threshold separating the era of educating, enlightening, and rallying the forces of the working class from the era of storming the bourgeois strongholds of the old world. For the new era, they proved to be obsolete—a fact that had become evident long before August 4, 1914. A clear formulation of the new tasks and tactics for this new era in the global labor movement was not worked out from the rostrum of the German Reichstag, nor from the platforms of French workers' assemblies, nor in the executive boards of English trade unions, nor on the pages of *Die Neue Zeit*; rather, it was

forged in the underground gatherings of Russian revolutionary proletarians, where Lenin debated and weighed the tactics of the struggle against Tsarism—a regime buttressed by the full might of international capitalism. The tactics debated there, and the tasks formulated there, could not remain confined within narrow national boundaries, within the confines of the Russian state, if only because the enemy against whom the struggle was waged drew its strength from the entire global organization of capital.

The French stock exchange and British imperialism, having bound their destinies in a direct alliance with Russian capital and the power of the Russian bourgeoisie, themselves impelled the thinking of advanced Russian revolutionaries onto the international stage, compelling them to frame every issue of their struggle on a global scale. Milyukov, Kerensky, and Tsereteli—who solemnly reaffirmed their loyalty to Tsarism’s allies—changed nothing. In this regard the global scope of thought, and the inclusion of the issues and problems of the world proletarian movement within the sphere of his immediate interests, were imposed upon the leader of the Russian proletariat by the very historical position of Russia over the last 25 years, to a greater extent than upon the representative of the working-class movement of any other country whatsoever.

Seventeen years ago, during the era of the First Duma, Lenin’s most formidable and most brilliant ideological opponent (and, for that very reason, the one he valued most highly), G. V. Plekhanov, asked Lenin: where, in his program, were the guarantees against a restoration? Lenin replied:

The sole guarantee against a restoration in Russia (the discussion concerned guarantees in the event of a victorious democratic revolution) can be nothing other than a socialist upheaval in the West. There is no other guarantee, nor can there be... To secure its victory—to prevent a restoration—the Russian revolution requires a non-Russian reserve... Does such a reserve exist anywhere in the world? It does: the socialist

proletariat of the West... The question, then, boils down to this: precisely how, and by what means, can the revolution in Russia facilitate or accelerate a socialist revolution in the West?

This was stated not in 1920, nor in 1917, nor in 1914, but in 1906. And just as this answer was no accident, just as it was no accident that backward, agrarian Russia became the first country to undergo a socialist revolution. So, too, was it no accident that the revolutionary doctrine of Marx, distorted and emasculated by the opportunism of leaders in the West, became once again, in the hands of Lenin, that very banner under which proletarians “storm the heavens”—that is, precisely what Marx himself had created it to be and what he had envisioned in it.

The historical situation in Europe during the years 1870–1900 developed in such a way that Marx’s doctrine, in the hands of his disciples, became primarily a tool for explaining the course of historical development and for forecasting a bright future. Those elements of this doctrine which called for immediate revolutionary action by the masses—elements which contained not an explanation of history, but rather a guide for a proletariat rising up against the bourgeoisie—were forgotten and allowed to wither away. For the Russian proletariat, however, the situation was different: the immediate order of the day was precisely insurrection; consequently, it embraced Marx’s doctrine in its entirety, compelled to defend against entrenched opportunism those specific features of Marx’s teaching which, under the scornful labels of “Blanquism,” “conspiratorialism,” and “utopianism,” were rejected by the Western European “philistines of socialism,” and, following their lead, by the Russian opportunists—the Social Democrats.

For Lenin, Marx’s theory is likewise immutable and integral; it serves as an analytical tool just as indispensable as fundamental algebraic formulas are to a structural engineer. Its practical

conclusions—the doctrine regarding the intensification of class struggle, civil war, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the state—which transform it into the doctrine of a militant, combative class and which call for an offensive, received precisely in Lenin’s works the elaboration that Western European theoreticians could not, or would not, provide. For them, in the era following 1870, this was simply of no interest. Yet it was precisely over these aspects of Marx’s doctrine that Lenin waged countless battles against opportunists of every country and every stripe.

When, in 1901, Lenin wrote that a socialist organization must be prepared to “prepare, organize, and carry out a nationwide armed uprising,” to the average European Social Democrat, this could not help but appear as a product of the barbarically backward conditions of struggle prevailing in Russia. Yet it was precisely this focus on such questions, this fusion of Marxism with the immediate revolutionary movement of the broad masses, that ensured that when the question of a proletarian uprising finally rose to the top of the agenda across Europe, the masses of European workers were compelled to seek the answers to the pressing questions of their own movement specifically in Lenin’s articles, works, and experience.

The impassioned defense of the militant conclusions of the doctrine of class struggle—those very conclusions that, whether intentionally or otherwise, had been blunted during the preceding era; a ruthless struggle against the slightest deviation from revolutionary theory; a constant readiness to stand alone against “everyone”—against “everyone” at the very top, yet in the closest unity with the genuine working masses—in the name of “orthodox,” i.e., revolutionary, Marxism: this is the new current that Lenin, first and foremost, introduced into the theory and practice of the global socialist movement. “Sectarianism” and “factionalism”—this is how the petty bourgeoisie attempted to

brand Lenin's tactics. Historically, however, Lenin's "sectarianism" and "factionalism" were merely the necessary and inevitable means of upholding and developing precisely those directly revolutionary aspects of Marxism that became the living water for the global proletariat by the end of the imperialist war.

Kautsky, Plekhanov, and Guesde each waged a magnificent and fruitful struggle against the opportunism of the Bernsteins and Millerands. It is clear, however, that the plane and scope of this struggle were different. While defending—alongside Kautsky (on the agrarian question) and Plekhanov (on the philosophy of Marxism)—the foundations of Marx's teachings, Lenin placed on the agenda, first within the Russian movement, and subsequently within the international one, precisely those questions concerning the immediate mass movement which those earlier disputes had left untouched. From the sphere of general questions regarding capitalist development and parliamentary tactics, these issues were shifted into the sphere of the direct struggle of a proletariat rising up...against capitalist society. It was here that it became apparent that the unbridgeable chasm lay not between Plekhanov, Kautsky, and Lenin on the one hand, and Bernstein on the other—but rather between Lenin on the one hand, and Plekhanov, Kautsky, Guesde, and Bernstein on the other.

In Lenin's arduous, "sectarian," and "schismatic" struggle spanning two decades, the principles of a new theory and a new tactic suited to a new, world-historical epoch fought and grew strong in opposition to the finest representatives of a dying period in the history of the working-class movement. The dead sought to stifle the living; yet the living survived and triumphed, and—reaching across the heads of the living dead—extended a hand to the eternally living Communards of Paris and to the legacy of Marx.

As if in anticipation of this struggle, Lenin wrote as early as 1901:

We are marching in a compact group along a precipitous and difficult path, firmly holding each other by the hand. We are surrounded on all sides by enemies, and we have to advance almost constantly under their fire. We have combined, by a freely adopted decision, precisely for the purpose of fighting our enemies and not stumbling into the adjacent swamp, the inhabitants of which have, from the very outset, reproached us for having separated ourselves into an exclusive group and for having chosen the path of struggle instead of the path of conciliation.

This was true in 1901; it remains true today.

If the novel formulation of new questions regarding the theory and practice of the working-class movement constitutes one aspect of Lenin's contribution to the global proletarian movement, then a new approach to the role of the masses in the work of historical construction constitutes the other aspect of that same contribution.

And this question, too, must be approached historically. From 1848 to 1905, with the exception of the brief period of the Paris Commune, the working masses in Europe did not appear on the streets of its well-ordered cities as the masters and builders of life. Parliamentarians acted as substitutes for the people, and parliamentary clashes took the place of street fighting. The question of power, of the forcible transfer of power from the hands of one class into the hands of another, was taken off the agenda. Socialists relied upon the proletarian masses; yet, acting as parliamentarians and trade union officials, they preferred to act *on behalf* of the masses, while above all seeking to avoid any direct, active intervention by the masses themselves. By following this path, official Social Democracy reached a dead end.

The stagnant atmosphere of this impasse compelled Rosa Luxemburg, a year and a half before the war, to sound the alarm and once again raise the question of "direct mass action" by the

working class. Meanwhile, since the turn of the century, the Russian proletariat had been living in an atmosphere of direct mass action and direct clashes with the guardians of state order; indeed, during the years 1905, 1906, and 1907, it repeatedly emerged victorious in these clashes and stood as the master of the streets. It knew that the question of power was decided precisely through its own open mass actions, and that no other means existed to resolve this issue. Questions concerning the direct activism of the masses, their spontaneous and freely evolving self-organization, the integration of political and economic struggle, the *de facto* seizure of “freedoms,” and the seizure of power—both at the center and in individual cities—by striking, demonstrating, and armed workers constituted the most urgent and practical issues facing the movement.

The practice of this spontaneous, boundary-shattering, power-seizing, mass, and active movement of the proletariat found its voice in Lenin. He foresaw it theoretically—weighing, in the early 1900s, the possible forms of the proletariat’s struggle. He defended it during the years 1905–1907; he upheld the traditions of this very movement during the bleak era of reaction from 1908 to 1912; he relied upon it to wrest power from the hands of the bourgeoisie in 1917; and he made it, both theoretically and practically, the foundation for the construction of the first proletarian state.

Distrust of the piecemeal tinkering with bills by parliamentary windbags and the absolute conviction that only the direct participation of the enslaved millions of working people themselves in the work of historical construction could lead humanity out of its impasse naturally took firm root in this environment and became the starting point for all of Lenin’s subsequent tactics. And indeed, this alone could serve as the starting point for any successful policy at a moment when the

World War had awakened to historical life millions of wage-slaves of capital. It was precisely such a theory that the world proletariat needed most—a proletariat that now found itself facing the shattered wreckage of the “reformists” hopes for a mitigation of contradictions and the peaceful transformation of capitalism into socialism.

“There is dawning,” wrote Lenin in 1906,

a period of direct political activity by the 'common people'—people who simply, directly, and immediately smash the organs of the people's oppression, seize power, and take for themselves that which was deemed to belong to all manner of plunderers of the people; in a word, a time when the thought and reason of millions of downtrodden people truly awaken—awaken not merely to read books, but for action: for living, human action, for historical creativity.

To write these words in 1906 meant shifting the entire center of gravity in the understanding of European socialism; it meant inaugurating a new period of proletarian struggle; it meant delineating the fundamental guiding principles for the tactics of a proletariat transitioning from the preliminary gathering of its forces to an uprising against capital.

It was upon the foundation of this absolute trust in the historical creativity of the working masses—who, in Lenin's words, forge a new world with all their “virginal primitiveness, their simple, rough-hewn resolve”—that Lenin resolved the most difficult problem facing the modern global proletarian movement: the problem of power—a problem that, through the centuries-long efforts of priests, lawyers, statesmen, professors, and poets, had been shrouded in all the deceptions of mysticism and metaphysics.

The new power, as the dictatorship of the vast majority, could sustain itself, and indeed did sustain itself, exclusively by virtue of the trust of the immense masses; exclusively by drawing the entire mass into participation in governance in the freest, broadest, and most vigorous

manner possible. Nothing concealed, nothing secret; no regulations, no formalities. Are you a working person? Do you wish to fight for the liberation of Russia from a handful of police-state oppressors? Then you are our comrade. Elect your deputy—elect him right now, immediately, in whatever way you deem appropriate—and we will gladly and joyfully welcome him as a full-fledged member of our Council of Workers' Deputies, our Peasants' Committee, or our Council of Soldiers' Deputies. This is a power open to all; a power that conducts all its affairs in full view of the masses, is accessible to the masses, and emanates directly from the masses—a direct and immediate organ of the popular masses and of their will.

In the years 1917–1920, the proletariat of Russia, Finland, Hungary, and Germany proceeded to put into practice these words from 1906—words that at the time had seemed like unheard-of heresy, yet which, in reality, constituted a prescient vision of the only possible and inevitable forms of state-building for a proletariat rising up against the old world. Lenin's entire art of statecraft lay in the fact that he knew that the masses, the millions of working people, would do what needed to be done; that the proletarian state had no interests other than the interests of these millions; that they would perform the task hundreds of times better than even the most revolutionary bureaucracy; and that the fundamental and all-encompassing objective was to draw these masses—down to the very last person, to the very bottom—into the work of the state.

It was upon this profound trust in the collective intellect of the working people that the will to victory rested—a will without which Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov would never have become Lenin, and without which the cause of Leninism could never have been realized. For Lenin, the will to victory, the readiness to seize power, was not a trait of individual character—Ilyich harbored not a single ounce of personal lust for power. Rather, it was the expression of the new sentiments of millions—the collective consciousness, purchased at a heavy price, that without a decisive

victory, without the conquest of power, and without the readiness to wield that power just as a worker wields a hammer, there could be no escape from the impasse.

The will to victory, the resolve to conquer, the audacity to shoulder *all* the consequences of a decisive victory, without exception, was utterly absent from European socialism during the years 1870–1900. A slavish fear of victory—the “sociology of cowards”—remains to this very day the defining characteristic of global Menshevism. It is precisely this slavish fear of their own victory that transforms Menshevik leaders, to borrow Lenin’s phrase, from mere slaves of capitalism into its serfs, into the boors and lackeys of their masters.

Lenin knew that, in order to set foot upon the broad highway of history, the working-class movement must, first and foremost, cast off this psychology.

“There can be no question of energetically and successfully assembling an army—let alone leading it—without the absolute conviction that we *dare to win*,” Lenin wrote.

That is why, as early as the eve of the First Russian Revolution in 1905, he confronted the Mensheviks head-on and placed the problem of the proletariat’s victory squarely on the agenda.

“Dare we win? Is it permissible for us to win? Is it not dangerous for us to win? Ought we to win?” This question—strange at first glance—was nonetheless posed, and indeed *had* to be posed; for the opportunists feared (and still fear) victory, sought to wean (and still seek to wean) the proletariat away from it, prophesied (and still prophesy) calamities stemming from it, and ridiculed (and still ridicule) slogans that directly called for it.

If one defines genius as the ability to express, formulate, and render universally intelligible those thoughts and sentiments that are ripening deep within the vast majority of human beings, thereby revealing to them new historical paths, then what lies

before us here is precisely such a stroke of genius: a thought that encompasses the overwhelming majority of all humanity, articulates its deepest and most cherished sentiments, and alone opens up the road to the future.

The concrete embodiment of this brilliant framing of the question was Lenin's famous response regarding the issue of power, delivered at the First Congress of Soviets in 1917—a response that preordained not only the October Revolution itself, but also the ultimate victory of that revolution.

He¹ asserted that there was no political party in Russia prepared to declare its readiness to assume full power entirely upon itself. To that, I reply: *there is* such a party; our party does not shrink from this task; at any moment, it stands ready to assume full power.

With this declaration—met with laughter and indignation—of the working class's will to victory, of its resolve to assume power and accept all its consequences, a new epoch opens in the history of socialism and the labor movement, and, consequently, in the history of the destiny of humanity.

Through his entire personality, his ideas, and his work, Lenin not only embodied this new epoch of the labor movement—with its revolutionary surge and “will to victory”—but he actually achieved victory in practice, which was the harder task. Lenin not only charted the paths to victory; he secured the fruits of that victory—a task even more difficult still.

He bequeathed to us the duty to develop and expand this victory. This can be accomplished only by arming ourselves with the weapon of Leninism.

¹ Tsereteli, or Kerensky, or perhaps someone else, for history, having eternally enshrined Lenin's answer in its memory, has long since forgotten the name of the questioner. —L.K.

Цена 8 к.

Л Е Н Г И З

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